Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (previously presented) A comparative inspection device comprising:
a stage on which an object is mounted and which moves said object;
a detector for detecting an image of said object on said stage, said image
comprising a plurality of inspection image regions, and for outputting an image signal;

an image processing unit for receiving said image signal, determining a plurality of offsets for said plurality of inspection image regions relative to a plurality of corresponding reference image regions, and determining a selected offset out of a set of offsets of the plurality of offsets, wherein said set has at least one high reliability offset of said plurality of offsets

a comparing unit for aligning an inspection image and a reference image using said selected offset and comparing said aligned inspection image and said reference image to detect a defect candidate; and

a feature extracting unit for extracting a feature of said defect candidate.

- 2. (previously presented) The comparative inspection device of claim 1, wherein said plurality of corresponding reference image regions are related to a time delayed plurality of inspection image regions, wherein said inspection image is an entire image of said object.
- 3. (original) The comparative inspection device of claim 1, wherein said selected offset is used to align an entire inspection image and an entire reference image.
- 4. (original) The comparative inspection device of claim 1, wherein a reliability of an offset of said set is a high reliability offset if a pattern on an image region of said first image regions is dense and is a low reliability offset if said pattern is sparse.

- 5. (original) The comparative inspection device of claim 1 wherein a reliability of an offset of said set is evaluated by comparing said offset with a predicted offset from past variations of offsets.
- 6. (previously presented) A comparative inspection device comprising: an image detection means for detecting a plurality of inspection image regions; an offset determining means for detecting offsets for said plurality of inspection image regions;

an offset selection means for determining a selected offset with a high reliability from said offsets;

an alignment means for aligning an entire inspection image and an entire reference image using said selected offset; and

a comparing means for comparing said aligned inspection image and said reference image to detect a defect candidate; and

a feature extracting unit for extracting a feature of said defect candidate.

7. (previously presented) A method for comparative inspection, said method comprising:

detecting a first image of a specimen;

detecting a second image of a specimen;

dividing said first image into a plurality of divisional images;

dividing said second image into a plurality of corresponding divisional images;

calculating offsets between said plurality of divisional images and said plurality of corresponding divisional images;

determining an offset between said first image and said second image out of a set of offsets between said calculated offsets;

aligning said first image and said second image using said selected offset; and comparing said aligned first image and said second image to detect a defect candidate.

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8-10. (canceled).

- 11. (currently amended) A method according to the claim 7_wherein, when images are received consecutively, full-image offset reliability of said image offset for said first image is evaluated and, if said full-image offset reliability is low, said first image is aligned using a past offset having a high full-image offset reliability.
- 12. (currently amended) A method according to the claim 7_wherein, when images are received consecutively, if an evaluation of full-image offset reliability for said image offset determines that full-image offset reliability is high, said image offset is stored as reference data for subsequent image alignments.
- 13. (currently amended) A method according to the claim 7_wherein, when images are received consecutively, full-image offset reliability is determined by comparing collected past offsets with high full-image offset reliability with said image offset.

14-21. (canceled).

22. (currently amended) A method for detecting defects in a semiconductor device, said method comprising:

dividing an inspection image of said semiconductor device obtained by capturing an image of said semiconductor device into a plurality of inspection sub-images;

dividing a <u>reference</u> image of said semiconductor device obtained by capturing an image of said semiconductor device into a plurality of corresponding sub-images each of which correspond to one of said inspection sub-images;

forming a plurality of sub-image sets, each sub-image set comprising one of said inspection sub-images and a corresponding one of said corresponding sub-images;

calculating a plurality of offsets for said plurality of sub-image sets;

determining an image offset between said inspection image and said reference image from said calculated plurality of offsets;

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aligning said inspection image and said reference image using said determined image offset; and

comparing said aligned inspection image and said reference image to detect a defect candidate.

23-26. (canceled).

- 27. (previously presented) A method according to the claim 22 wherein an offset of said plurality of offsets is determined using a correlation matrix for a sub-image set of said plurality of sub-image sets.
- 28. (previously presented) A method according to the claim 27 wherein said offset is a selected offset when said correlation matrix has a largest value above a predetermined threshold.
- 29. (previously presented) A method according to the claim 22 wherein said determining said image offset using selected offsets, comprises using correlation matrices associated with said selected offsets to determine a composite correlation matrix, and using said composite correlation matrix to determine said image offset.
- 30. (previously presented) A comparative inspection device of a specimen on which a pattern is formed, said device comprising:

a detector, for receiving a current image of said pattern formed on said specimen; an image processing unit for receiving a current image of said pattern from said detector and determining an offset between said current image and a corresponding previously-detected image from a plurality of offset information between plural portions of said current image and a plural portions of said corresponding previously-detected image; and

a defect inspection unit which aligns said current image and said corresponding previously-detected image by using said determined offset and compares said aligned current image and said corresponding previously-detected image to detect difference between said aligned current image and said corresponding previously-detected image as a defect.

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- 31. (previously presented) A comparative inspection device according to the claim 30 wherein said offset is used in determining an alignment offset between said current image and said corresponding previously-detected image.
 - 32. (canceled).
- 33. (previously presented) The comparative inspection device of claim 30, further comprising a delay memory for storing said corresponding portion.
 - 34-38. (canceled).
- 39. (currently amended) A method according to the claim 7, further comprising extracting a feature of said defect candidate.
- 40. (currently amended) A method according to the claim 22, further comprising extracting a feature of said defect candidate.
- 41. (previously presented) A comparative inspection device according to the claim 30, further comprising a feature extracting unit for extracting a feature of said detected defect.